

## NUS MEDIA RELEASE PACK

For immediate release

Tuesday 8th May, 2018

**NUS: representing over 1 million students nationally.**

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*For further comment on any of the releases;*

#### **Mark Pace**

NUS President

E: [president@nus.asn.au](mailto:president@nus.asn.au)

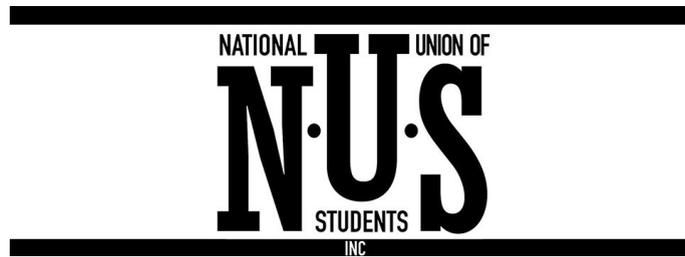
P: 0411 606 808

#### **Jacob Cripps**

NUS General Secretary

E: [gensec@nus.asn.au](mailto:gensec@nus.asn.au)

P: 0455 185 366



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### **Liberal's Australia Worse Than Trump's America.**

In light of the recent budget announcements, the Liberal government has decreased its investment in higher education to lower than 0.5% GDP. The *OECD Education at a Glance Report* found that the United States of America invests a total of 1% of their GDP into Tertiary Education. The same report also ranks Australia's public investment in tertiary education in the bottom four of the world's advanced economies – 30th out of 34 nations – at just 0.7% of our GDP. Now, with the 2018 Budgetary report, this seems to not be getting any better.

NUS believes that an investment in knowledge is an investment in Australia's future. While, Universities Australia's Chief Executive Belinda Robinson said that "less university funding means fewer skilled graduates" in a press release yesterday. Clearly, the Liberal Government does not hold the same opinion.

"We should be world leaders in Higher Education. Focusing on a stronger higher-education system, and building a better budget for students means a better budget for Australia's future" says NUS President, Mark Pace.

"We are currently lagging in the Higher-Education sector. If the Liberal's matched Donald Trump's investment of 1% GDP in higher education, our universities wouldn't have an excuse to cut courses and fire staff. It would mean we would have a trained and skilled nation. It would mean Australia can live up to its potential of being the best OECD country for Higher Education" he continued.

"It's time Malcolm Turnbull has a reality check. He needs to stop delivering tax-breaks for multinationals, and start focusing on higher education. This Budget is a complete kick-in-the-guts for students, and we will be fighting back."

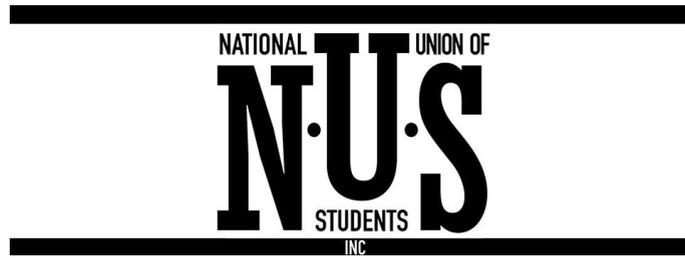
*For further comment;*

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NUS President

E: [president@nus.asn.au](mailto:president@nus.asn.au)

P: 0411 606 808



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### **Government Violates Human Rights of Young People**

The National Union of Students is calling on the Federal Government to increase commonwealth income support programs such as Newstart. It's been 24 years since any government has increased the payments for newstart.

In light of the Anglicare *Rental Affordability Snapshot*, there were only 3 rental properties in the country that were affordable for students under Newstart. Under Youth Allowance there are only 2 affordable rental properties.

NUS believes this Government is failing to provide everybody's fundamental human right to affordable housing. NUS is calling on the Federal Government to raise the rate of Newstart by \$100 and youth allowance and other rental support programs to help lower the burden on young people.

"It's not surprising that some students have been forced to sleep in libraries, cars and couch surfing to help make ends meet" said NUS President, Mark Pace. "This government needs to build a better budget by literally building more affordable public housing"

"It's a fundamental human right to have access to affordable housing and this government is failing to provide that" said Welfare Officer, Jordon O'Reilly "Not one home was affordable for a single person on Newstart or Youth Allowance in Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, Adelaide, Darwin or Perth"

*For further comment;*

**Mark Pace**

NUS President

E: [president@nus.asn.au](mailto:president@nus.asn.au)

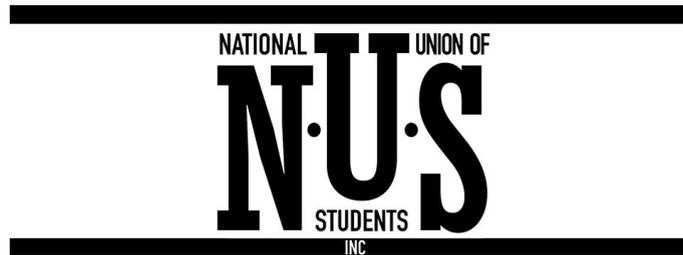
P: 0411 606 808

**Jordon O'Reilly**

NUS Welfare

E: [welfare@nus.asn.au](mailto:welfare@nus.asn.au)

P: 0478527151



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**Minimum 50% SSAF to Student Organisations**

The National Union of Students is calling on the federal government to legislate 50% minimum SSAF to student run organisations.

The current structure of the SSAF allocation, where student organisations must negotiate with the university to receive their funding allocations, provides economic instability for these organisations which has a major effect on their ability to provide student services.

“If our Student organisations are expected to maintain campus life, provide crucial services and ensure student safety and wellbeing they deserve to be receiving a fair share of SSAF paid by students,” says Mark Pace NUS President.

Legislated minimum SSAF is already on the Labor Party’s national agenda and has already been delivered in Western Australia. Western Australian student organisations have flourished since the introduction of 50% SSAF allocation and it’s time for student associations around the country to have the same opportunity.

“Before VSU, Student Unions not only provided amazing services and events, they also ran campaigns. These campaigns were a force to be reckoned with and that’s why the Liberal’s are running scared. It’s just another way to keep a monopoly over students, and lock out the little guy. It’s unfair, unjust and un-Australian.” says Pace.

“The Liberal’s have not provided anything for students in their 5 years of government, its time they build a better budget and 50% SSAF would be a great place to start. With Labor supporting a legislated minimum SSAF, this will be be an issue that students take to the ballot box,” says Jordon O’Reilly NUS Welfare Officer.

*For further comment;*

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NUS President

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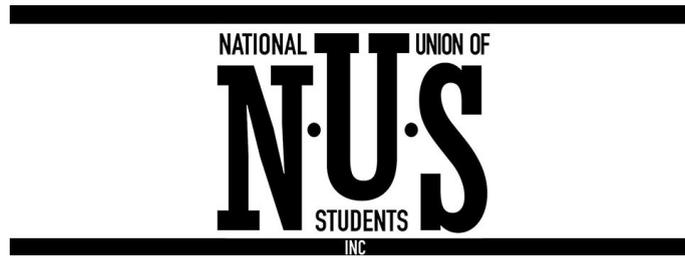
P: 0411 606 808

**Jordon O’Reilly**

NUS Welfare Officer

E: [welfare@nus.asn.au](mailto:welfare@nus.asn.au)

P: 0478 527 151



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### **Build A Better Budget, Now!**

This morning, Peter Costello spoke on *The 7:30 Report* and announced that we have gone from having no net debt to borrowing almost half a trillion dollars. This will mean things like Youth Allowance increases, student service benefits and investments into higher education will be completely rephended by the Liberal Budget. Future generations of young Australians will be paying back the debt accumulated by the Liberals.

Mark Pace says, “The Liberal’s have always spouted this nonsense of being responsible investors, but a responsible investment would be an investment in higher-education.”

“Student welfare is being crucified by Malcolm Turnbull. Things like better access to housing, decreased wait times for Newstart, and increases to Youth Allowance are being completely dismantled by the Turnbull administration. This, alongside the myriad of cuts to education paints a very pretty picture of what the Liberals think of student’s in Australia” Pace continues.

This is why NUS is launching their campaign ‘Build a Better Budget’ on Wednesday the 16th of May, 2018. This campaign will focus student welfare and increasing funding to education. Specifically, “we want to see a \$100 per week increase to Youth Allowance, 1% GDP invested in Higher Education and legislation detailing that 50% of SSAF goes to student organisations” says Pace.

“There will be a press conference at the University of Melbourne to tell the Liberal Government that we want them to build a better budget for students and for Australia’s future” says Pace.

All media is invited to attend the press conference. The details for the press conference are:

**When:** 10AM Wednesday 16 May, 2018

**Where:** University of Melbourne, North Court

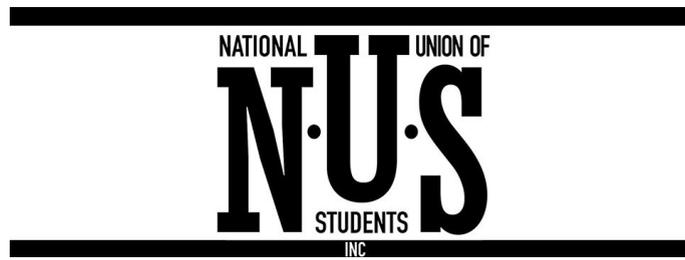
*For further comment;*

**Mark Pace**

NUS President

E: [president@nus.asn.au](mailto:president@nus.asn.au)

P: 0411 606 808



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### **International Students Suffering Due to Lack of Housing**

The National Union of Students is calling on the Government to take urgent action to address homelessness amongst International Students.

International Student numbers are up 12% this year, as numbers continue to rise as the international market continues to be a huge money grab for universities.

However in recent months, reports have emerged of international students finding it harder to afford housing while they study at Australian Universities.

“We’re seeing a huge increase in the demand of affordable housing, and landlords are quite often exploiting that, putting them into subpar accommodation, sometimes illegal, and quite often horrific” Said NUS President Mark Pace. “I’m not surprised that students in this case have found they had to live on campus.”

“It’s clear that Australian University’s and the Government have failed to adequately support the growth of international students in Australia” said NUS Welfare Officer Jordon O’Reilly. “If we build a better budget, it would mean no student is forced to live in temporary housing. It would also mean no student will have to consider living in university libraries or study spaces, or overcrowded housing”

Department of Education and Training figures show that there are 512 000 students enrolled in Higher Education, VET, Schools, English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) and Non-award sectors. A 12% growth in year to date numbers, and a 16% growth in higher education. A report by [Savills](#) shows that in each capital city there is less than 11% of purpose built accommodation of the fulltime student population. The report also found that Sydney has the biggest demand but hardest to access.

*For further comment;*

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NUS President

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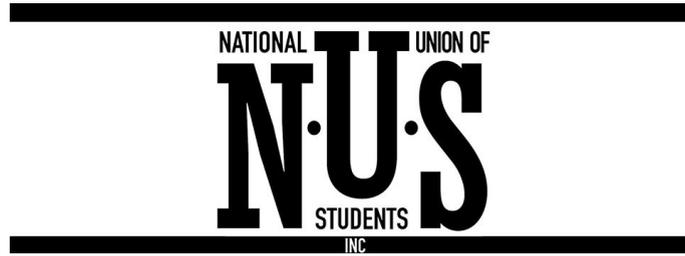
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**Jordon O’Reilly**

NUS Welfare Officer

E: [welfare@nus.asn.au](mailto:welfare@nus.asn.au)

P: 0478 527 151



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### **Women Students Use Budget Papers as Tampons**

The National Union of Students is outraged to see that the Liberal Government will continue their discriminatory tax on tampons and other menstrual sanitary items.

The average amount of blood loss from each period is between 29ml to 118ml which means that women pay between 1.2 and 4.9 cents per ml in taxes to the Australian Government.

“This country has a history of male only treasurers that have ignored this issue and clearly do not understand the financial burden of menstruation,” says Kate Crossin, NUS Women’s Officer “The Federal Government has no right to expect us to pay more tax because of the gender we were born as.”

With every Labor leader around the country committing to working with the government on exempting these sanitary items from the GST, this is an issue that is on the minds of all women in this country.

“We aren’t just talking about your average woman who spends about \$150 a year on sanitary items. We are talking about single mothers with women children, we’re talking about students living below the poverty line,” Says Crossin, “Women all over the country are already struggling to make ends meet and on top of that they are paying taxes to maintain simple hygiene.”

*For further comment;*

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NUS President

E: [president@nus.asn.au](mailto:president@nus.asn.au)

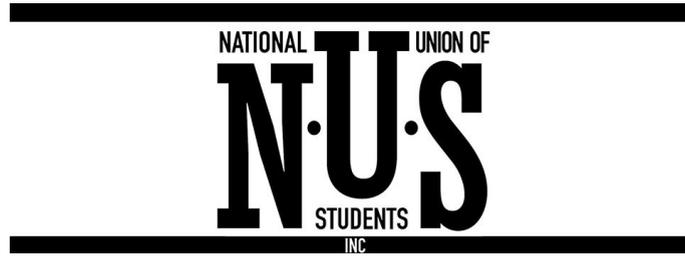
P: 0411 606 808

**Kate Crossin**

NUS Women’s Officer

E: [womens@nus.asn.au](mailto:womens@nus.asn.au)

P: 0447 193 891



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### **Turnbull, Increase Minimum Wage or Decrease Your Electability**

NUS is calling on the Federal Government to increase the minimum wage. Stagnant wage growth is killing our economy and impacting students ability to access higher education.

With cuts to penalty rates, slow wage growth and the proposed increases to higher education fees, students are being forced to make up for the government's bottom line with their budget shortfalls.

The wage growth submission by the Australian Council of Social Services found that 41% young people under the age of minimum wage earn close to the National Minimum Wage.

The same submission found that the NMW has only increased in real terms by an average of 0.3% per annum over the last decade. Leaving minimum wage-earners and their families at risk of falling behind community living standards.

“A consistent complaint from the Liberals is that young people are entitled. Well I will not apologise for wanting a minimum wage that is livable and fair. The rules are broken and if Scott Morrison cared about young people he'd build a better budget.”

“This government has no regard to the working conditions of young people, they want to make students debt slaves because they hate young people” said NUS Welfare Officer, Jordon O'Reilly. “Raising the minimum wage is an investment by stimulating our economy but helps create better graduates”

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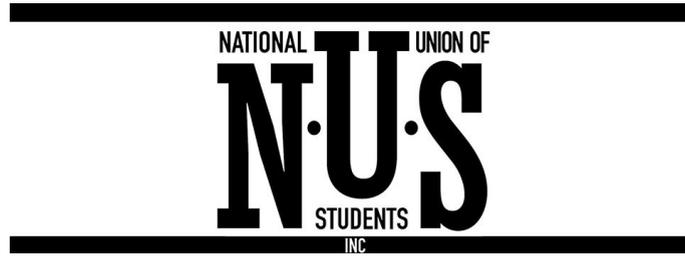
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**Jordon O'Reilly**

NUS Welfare Officer

E: [welfare@nus.asn.au](mailto:welfare@nus.asn.au)

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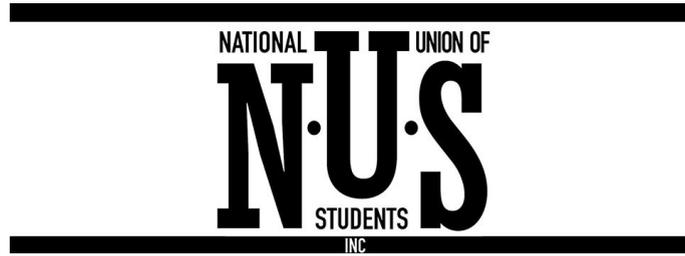
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NUS Welfare Officer

E: [welfare@nus.asn.au](mailto:welfare@nus.asn.au)

P: 0478527151



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### **Students Wary Over Government's Plan to Chase-Up Centrelink Debt**

NUS is warning the government to plan carefully when chasing up Centrelink Debt.

The department of Social services has started contacting welfare recipients who owe them money to reclaim money owed to them. However NUS is hesitant of attempts by the government to recover debts in light of last year's robo debt scandal.

“This Federal Government is hell-bent on discouraging Australians from accessing income support” said Mark Pace, NUS President. “Consistent cuts to customer service, excessive waiting times, and shifting again to a punitive debt recovery system show that the Liberals will do whatever it takes to discourage Australians from accessing welfare support”.

“I am very cautious of any attempt by this government to recover centrelink debts” Said Jordon O’Reilly, National Welfare Officer. “The Government has shown little regard for the Senate Committee's recommendations into the debt recovery system. The government has charged less than 0.01% of centrelink users for social security fraud”.

You can view the transcript of NUS appearance before the Better Management of the Social Welfare System initiative committee [here](#). Also, look out for the hashtag and NUS campaign on Build a Better Budget to stay updated.

*For further comment;*

**Mark Pace**

NUS President

E: [president@nus.asn.au](mailto:president@nus.asn.au)

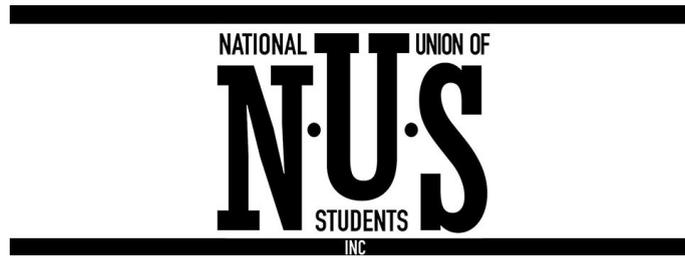
P: 0411 606 808

**Jordon O’Reilly**

NUS Welfare Officer

E: [welfare@nus.asn.au](mailto:welfare@nus.asn.au)

P: 0478 527 151



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### **Liberal's line women up to take full force of budget attacks**

The National Union of Students is ashamed to see that once again, women students are set to feel the full force of attacks from another Liberal government budget.

The proposed lowering of the HECs HELP repayment threshold to \$42k, to be voted on tomorrow in the senate, will see roughly 112,000 low income women forced to pay back tens of thousands of dollars in student debts. These changes are going to financially cripple young women and single mothers who are already struggling to save for a house or looking to start a family.

“The Liberals have made it clear that if you're a woman student or graduate in this country, you will face a lifetime of financial burden at the hands of the government” Says Kate Crossin, NUS Women's Officer, “Women already graduate earning significantly less than men and instead of helping to bridge that gap, this government is looking to push women into further struggle.”

“If there's one thing you can count on from any Liberal government in this country, it's that they will never fail to produce attacks on Australian women” Says Mark Pace NUS President.

*For further comment;*

**Mark Pace**

NUS President

E: [president@nus.asn.au](mailto:president@nus.asn.au)

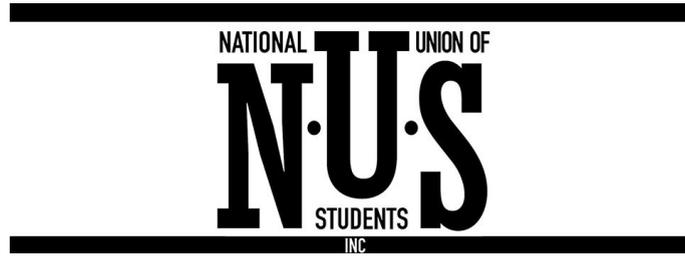
P: 0411 606 808

**Kate Crossin**

NUS Women's Officer

E: [Womens@nus.asn.au](mailto:Womens@nus.asn.au)

P: 0447 193 891



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### **Baby Boomer Budget Burdens Australia's Young People**

The last Liberal Budget before a Federal Election saw policies and investments which focused on Australia's baby boomers while neglecting many of the deep-rooted problems young Australians face.

This has been repeated in this Federal Budget. There is countless tax breaks for multinationals and \$7.5B invested in Air Force Capabilities. All-the-while investment in higher education has dropped. This is clearly out-of-touch of modern day Australia's needs.

Two thirds of Australia's university students live below the Henderson Poverty line, and the maximum income support a student can access is only 54% of the poverty line.

"This generation will be the first priced out of the housing market, underemployment is rife and we've seen low wage growth for decades" said Mark Pace, NUS President. "A recent Anglicare report outlined the severe need for affordable housing in Australia, with only three properties nationwide affordable to students living on income support".

"The times have changed. Trying to buy-off lower income earners with a \$3 per week tax break is insulting. I can't even buy a textbook with that money" says Pace.

"We're not surprised the Liberals have locked young people out of the budget. The Liberal Government has refused to meet with the National Union of Students on education and welfare issues all year and has rammed legislation through parliament"

*For further comment:*

**Mark Pace**

NUS President

E: [president@nus.asn.au](mailto:president@nus.asn.au)

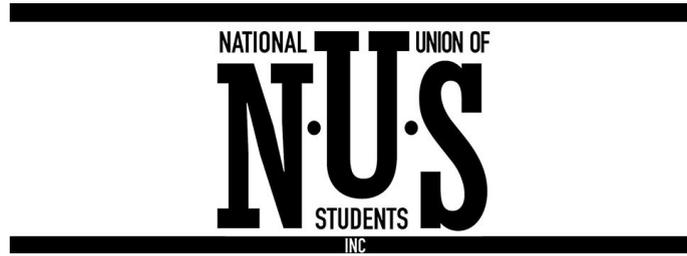
P: 0411 606 808

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NUS Welfare Officer

E: [welfare@nus.asn.au](mailto:welfare@nus.asn.au)

P: 0478 527 151



For immediate release

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### **Students call for long-term fully-funded National Disabilities Insurance Scheme**

The Turnbull Government has now released their 2018-19 Federal Budget, with Treasurer Scott Morrison confirming that the National Disabilities Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will be funded through the Government's tax savings and budget revenue.

This comes a week after the Government scrapped plans for increasing the Medicare Levy which would have provided an additional \$8 billion towards the scheme.

Advocates are concerned that losing the funding increase will leave an annual funding gap of \$4 billion at a fully operational scheme, accumulating to around \$56 billion by 2028, meaning there is no long-term funding certainty.

Since the rollout of the NDIS, results of the efficacy of the scheme have been mixed with a report released recently by Flinders University showing that at least 20% of participants felt worse off under the scheme.

Participants and advocates have been calling on the Government to increase the amount of case workers both in-person and over-the-phone, raise the funding given to disability service providers to carry out services, and extend the kinds of services supported under the scheme.

According to the Productivity Commission at least \$22 billion is needed in the annual budget for the NDIS to be carried out effectively.

The Labor Opposition Social Services spokesperson Jenny Macklin MP has recently come out as saying she is "incredibly frustrated" with the scheme that she helped design that is now currently a "bureaucratic mess" after being rolled out by the Coalition Government.

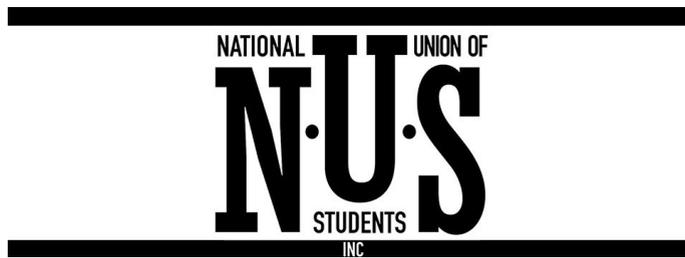
"People with disabilities deserve certainty in their future - the Government needs to stop treating us as second-class citizens and fund the NDIS properly now," said NUS Disabilities Officer Kayla Dickeson.

"It is pivotal that people with disabilities are adequately supported under a well-funded and properly-resourced NDIS. An NDIS with long wait times, lack of staff, bureaucratic paperwork and under-funded services is not what our community deserves".

#### **For comment;**

**Mark Pace** National President **P:** 0411 606 808 **E:** [President@nus.asn.au](mailto:President@nus.asn.au)

**Kayla Dickeson** National Disabilities Officer **P:** 0455 257 941 **E:** [Disabilities@nus.asn.au](mailto:Disabilities@nus.asn.au)



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### **Drug Testing Centrelink**

NUS is outraged at the government's plan to drug test centrelink recipients as away to demnise welfare recipients

The government is continuing its plan to drug test 5000 welfare recipients, despite the overwhelming evidence from the senate committee saying there is no proof that drug testing welfare recipients.

“The government is trying demonise some of the country’s most vulnerable people, especially young people” said NUS President Mark Pace “this is all a part of the Government punitive Welfare measures”

“There is very little evidence to support the idea that drug testing welfare recipients will in fact stop drug use in Australia” said Welfare Officer Jordon O’Reilly “This concept solely blames drug use in Australia, the day we drug test our most vulnerable should be the day we can drug test the Prime Minister”

The Turnbull Government is pushing ahead with it's plans to trial the drug-testing of roughly 5000 welfare recipients in QLD, NSW and WA. A strike system will be introduced to people who caught using drugs.

*For further comment;*

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NUS President

E: [president@nus.asn.au](mailto:president@nus.asn.au)

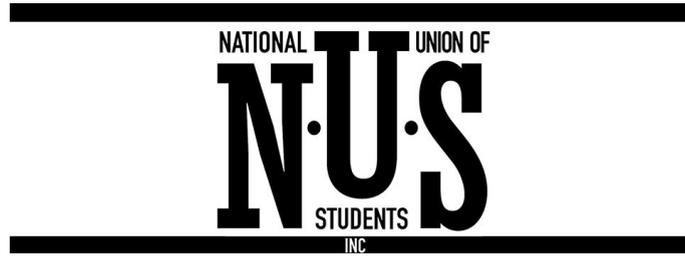
P: 0411 606 808

**Jordon O’Reilly**

NUS Welfare

E: [welfare@nus.asn.au](mailto:welfare@nus.asn.au)

P: 0478 527 151



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### **Students say: Books not Bombs!**

The Liberal Government has shown its vision for Australia's future and it is full of weapons and uneducated citizens.

With the 2018-19 Budget increasing defence funding while also cutting \$2.2Billion in higher education funding, Malcolm Turnbull has declared that war is more important than higher education.

"We demand the Government builds a better budget and prioritises Books not Bombs. By over-investing in arms manufacturing, and under-investing in higher education we are locking out students" says NUS President, Mark Pace.

"There is no excuse for this investment. It is not an investment in Australian jobs, it is only an investment into war and the pockets of Lockheed Martin. Let's build a better budget for students, not for the Liberal Party's biggest donors."

"It's time we start spending money on education, rather than have a dick-swinging contest with Trump" says NUS Women's Officer, Kate Crossin.

*For further comment;*

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NUS President

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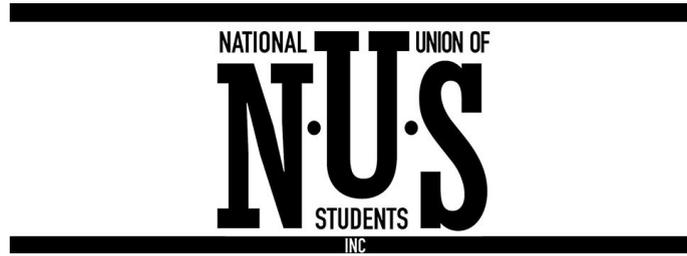
P: 0411 606 808

**Kate Crossin**

NUS Women's Office

E: [womens@nus.asn.au](mailto:womens@nus.asn.au)

P: 0447 193 891



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### **Australia says Yes!... To Free Education**

The National Union of Students is disheartened by the Liberal Government's failure to once again make higher education a priority.

"While our closest neighbours have committed to delivering free education, Malcolm Turnbull has overseen the biggest cuts to higher education in Australian History" Says Mark Pace, NUS President.

In a recent Ipsos Global Advisor survey, 88% of Australians said that they think education should be free of charge. NUS believes that it's time for Australia to follow in the steps of many others and provide free, accessible and high quality higher education.

"With so many countries around the world moving into the future with free education, Australia is at serious risk of being left behind" Says Pace, "There is absolutely zero benefit in pricing people out of higher education. In order for our country to continue to strive, this government needs to build a better budget to ensure that everyone has access to post-secondary education."

*For further comment;*

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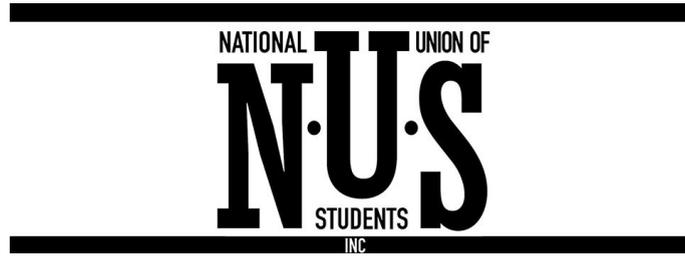
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### **No Real Increase to Newstart**

The National Union of Students is outraged at the announcement that they are increasing the scope of newstart to those with parents earning up to 160K per year if they come from a regional and rural family.

“What young people need is a increase into the amount paid, not have the sons and daughters of rich farmers” said NUS President, Mark Pace “We have a welfare system that is clearly broken, and there is no vision to fix it”

“It’s clear that the Government is pork barrelling to regional farmers who send their kids to university” said Welfare Officer, Jordon O’Reilly “This welfare system needs a dramatic overhaul and the government has clearly shied away from the real solution”.

*For further comment;*

**Mark Pace**

NUS President

E: [president@nus.asn.au](mailto:president@nus.asn.au)

P: 0411 606 808

**Jordon O’Reilly**

NUS Welfare Office

E: [welfare@nus.asn.au](mailto:welfare@nus.asn.au)

P: 0478 527 151